

**Montana Legal Services Association
Justice for Montanans Project
2010 - 2011 Grant Renewal Application**

CONTINUATION CHANGES

Rationale and Approach:

The Montana Legal Services Association (MLSA) is not making any significant changes to the rationale or approach for the Justice for Montanans Project. MLSA is making a few minor changes to the program, by changing the locations of some of the members and adding a Team Leader, as further described below. However, there are no changes to the project partners, the intended activities of the members or the overall structure of the program. MLSA believes that the first three months of this new project have successfully demonstrated how important these new AmeriCorps State members are to expanding the Access to Justice system around the state of Montana. MLSA successfully recruited 10 full time members, and one part-time member, and these members are already increasing the access that low income Montanans have to legal information and advice. For example, in Billings there has been a significant increase in the number of individuals utilizing the court-based self help law center with the additional support available through the AmeriCorps member based there. On average, the self-help law center in Billings provides assistance to 30 walk-ins per day. On its busiest day, the center saw approximately 60 walk-ins. In addition, through the new AmeriCorps members, the Montana Supreme Court Administrator's office was able to create three new self help law centers at courts in Bozeman and the remote, rural communities of Havre and Choteau. None of these communities had an organized program so the AmeriCorps members were assigned to work with court personnel to create self help programs to provide legal information to people in these communities. In addition to organizing the centers, the members have provided assistance to approximately 75 walk-ins since launching the self-help law sites.

MLSA's clients have felt the impact of having AmeriCorps members serving as part of MLSA's Helpline. With the help of the AmeriCorps members, MLSA has been able to process applications requesting assistance more quickly, the list of applicants waiting to be called by MLSA has been decreasing over the last two months, and the schedule of appointments to speak with an MLSA advocate has been full for five weeks in a row. The result is that through the service of these AmeriCorps members, more low income people in Montana are able to have better access to legal information and advice.

One of the changes for the continuation application is to the location of the court based AmeriCorps Member positions. The original grant application included plans to place two members at each of the existing court-based Self-Help Law Programs located in Billings, Missoula and Kalispell. During the development of this project, the project partners decided that more Montanans and communities would be served by locating

the court assigned members in Billings, Bozeman, Choteau/Shelby, Havre, Kalispell and Sidney. These changes provide the Supreme Court Administrator's Office with the opportunity to develop three new SHLP centers in some of Montana's more rural areas and expand services across the state. A chart of where the Justice for Montanans members are serving is included below.

- Billings (3 members)
- Bozeman (1 member)
- Choteau/Shelby (1 member)
- Havre (1 member)
- Helena (3 members)
- Kalispell (1 member)
- Missoula (1 member)

MLSA would like to convert one of its current member positions to a team leader position. The team leader will work under the direction of the Project Director and the MLSA site supervisor. This will be a 1700 hour position that will work along with the other AmeriCorps members to provide direct services as one of MLSA's HelpLine Intake and Outreach members. MLSA anticipates approximately 50% of the team leader's time will be spent providing direct services and the rest of the time will be used to support to the other members and the project by:

- assisting with the recruitment of AmeriCorps members, by helping the Project Director set up interviews with applicants and participate in the initial interviewing/screening process, help coordinate the referral of potential members to the appropriate sites, and answer basic questions about the Justice for Montanans Project and the roles of the AmeriCorps*State members; coordinating monthly group meetings;
- working with MLSA's Client Education and Outreach Attorney to coordinate the community outreach; and,
- coordinate collaborative projects of both MLSA and the SHLP members and helping with the Justice for Montanans volunteer recruitment efforts.

Recruitment and Enrollment: In its original grant application, the Justice for Montanans Project requested thirteen 1700 hour AmeriCorps member positions. Even though MLSA had only one month to recruit its full-time members after being notified of the grant award, MLSA successfully recruited 10 full-time AmeriCorps members for this brand new project. Since MLSA was unable to fill all 13 full-time positions, MLSA converted one slot to a part-time position, and continues to look for part-time members to fill the remaining vacant positions. Below is a list of where members are currently serving and the remaining part-time vacant positions:

- Billings
 - MLSA Intake and Outreach (full-time)
 - MLSA Intake and Outreach – Native American Unit (full-time)
 - Court-base self-help law center (full-time)

- Bozeman
 - Court-based self-help law center (full-time)
- Choteau/Shelby
 - Court-based self-help law center (full-time)
- Havre
 - Court-based self-help law center (full-time)
- Helena
 - MLSA Intake and Outreach (full-time)
 - MLSA HelpLine(full-time)
 - MLSA HelpLine (part-time)
 - Office of Consumer Protection and Victim Services (vacant)
(formerly known as the Attorney General's Office of Consumer Protection)
- Kalispell
 - Court-based self-help law center (full-time)
- Missoula
 - MLSA Intake and Outreach (full-time)
- Sidney
 - Court-based self-help law center (vacant)

The Justice for Montanans Project is continuing to actively recruit to fill the two remaining positions:

- Sidney
 - Court-based self-help law center (vacant)
- Helena
 - Office of Consumer Protection and Victim Services (vacant)

Plans for Improvement: MLSA has developed concrete plans to increase its recruitment success in future years. For the 2010-2011 grant year, MLSA will be in a position to start recruiting for candidates much earlier. MLSA plans to begin recruiting in May of 2010 and will continue to advertise through state-wide resources, such as the Montana job service, as well as local community based advertising efforts, such as through local newspapers and social service agencies. Detailed descriptions of projects as well as preferred qualifications and skills will be posted on the MLSA website, distributed to local community colleges and universities, and the link will be disseminated to community partners and other legal services contacts across the country.

Recruitment also will be conducted nationally through university career services offices, the AmeriCorps web-based recruitment system, Monster.com and idealist.org, as well as through correspondence with government offices and academic advisors. Due to the timing of the grant award and the website problems of the AmeriCorps website during August of 2009, MLSA was unable to use the AmeriCorps website for recruitment. The AmeriCorps system was unable to separate the AmeriCorps*State and AmeriCorps*VISTA applicants into different workbaskets. Provided the problems with the website have been resolved, MLSA intends to add the AmeriCorps website to its

recruitment efforts in the coming year to increase its ability to attract quality candidates from all over the country.

Finally, MLSA believes that adding a team leader position will allow MLSA to increase its recruitment efforts. As a current AmeriCorps member, a team leader will be in a good position to explain the project and the importance of AmeriCorps service to potential candidates. However, MLSA is confident that simply having more time in which to recruit will increase its success in recruiting candidates to fill 100% of its 1700 hour positions.

Retention: The Justice for Montanans Project has retained 100% of the members recruited for the 2009-2010 grant cycle.

Member Support: During the month of September, MLSA and the Justice for Montanans project spent its time recruiting and training new AmeriCorps*State members. AmeriCorps members have received training on topics such as cultural sensitivity, how the legal system can provide access to justice and how AmeriCorps members fit in to this model, and the basics on legal topics such as housing law, family law and domestic violence.

In October, the Project Director began conducting monthly conference calls with the AmeriCorps members to check in and track progress towards meeting the performance goals. In addition, the MLSA site supervisor, Tracie Poindexter, meets with each MLSA member every two weeks to provide support to the member and oversight. Lonnie Browning, site supervisor for the Supreme Court Administrator's Office Self-Help Law Program has begun traveling to each of the SHLP sites to spend a week with the member providing oversight and support. The Project Director along with the Site Supervisors will meet periodically to update each other on the progress of the individual sites, and to evaluate the Justice for Montanans progress in achieving its performance measures.

In addition, the Justice for Montanans Project is planning on bringing the members together midway through the service year to provide additional training and evaluate the progress made towards achieving the performance measures.

Community Outputs and Outcomes

Continuation Changes: MLSA is not making any significant changes to its Community Outputs and Outcomes. During their first two months of service, Justice for Montanans members have been actively participating in different capacity building projects to increase access to legal information and advice for low income people across Montana and prepare for further outreach into the community. In order to reach people across the state, MLSA uses technology to deliver legal information. Justice for Montanans members are assisting with the development and promotion of these electronic resources so that information is more easily available in the community.

The court-based AmeriCorps members in Havre and Choteau and are actively working on marketing and outreach plans to let the communities they serve know about the new self-help law centers. The court-based AmeriCorps members in Billings and Kalispell are preparing to expand their self-help legal information services to the nearby communities of Lewistown and Libby.

Organizational Capability

Continuation Changes: Since being awarded this grant, there has been a change in personnel for the Justice for Montanans project. Originally, Michelle Hauer was designated to be the Project Director. However, in the summer of 2009, Michelle accepted a position with a different organization. MLSA's Advocacy Coordinator, Elaine Dahl, has taken over the position as the Justice for Montanans Project Director.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

Continuation Changes:

Budget Narrative –Section C – Travel (Staff Travel): MLSA is changing the figures to send two instead of four staff to a national conference in the 2010-2011 grant year.

Budget Narrative – Section E – Supplies: MLSA is removing the costs of computers. This was a start-up expense. New and returning members will use computers purchased in the original grant.

Narrative Section II - Members Costs: MLSA is increasing the living allowance to \$11,800 per member for 13 full-time members.
MLSA is changing one of its positions to be a full-time team leader position with a living allowance of \$13,800.

Narrative Section III – Administrative Costs: The fixed Administrative Amount includes space and consumable costs for housing the AmeriCorps members by all three partner agencies and the time of MLSA administrative and accounting staff to administer the grant.

MLSA believes that this budget reflects an adequate amount of resources to support the program activities and provide increased access to the justice system for Montana's low income residents. In addition to the staff time reflected in the match portion of the budget, both MLSA and the partner agencies have spent additional time in the first year developing the project and its infrastructure.

Evaluation Summary or Plan: No changes. MLSA is competing for the AmeriCorps funds for its second year of its grant. MLSA is only a few months into its first grant and has not conducted an evaluation of its program. MLSA will spend much

of its time during the first year developing the project and its infrastructure. As part its second year grant, MLSA will develop a plan and the tools necessary to conduct an evaluation of the Justice for Montanans Project to identify its strengths, weaknesses and areas needing improvements. As part of the evaluation process MLSA and the Justice for Montanans Project will gather information and feedback from its grant partners, site supervisors, and project members.

Amendment Justification: N/A [per AmeriCorps State and National Application Instructions].

Clarification Information: N/A [per AmeriCorps State and National Application Instructions].